Towards A Primary Differentiation Between Film and Video
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Historically, both film and video are 19th-century manifestations. The concept of an electrical scanning or linearization of the real (i.e. the reproduction of the two-dimensional representation of three-dimensional space by means of a one-dimensional line repeatedly folded back upon itself within a single field) developed first. For television to become commercially feasible, however, fairly sophisticated electronic technology is necessary. Film disseminated several decades before video by virtue of its grounding in mechanism. All that was necessary was the perfection of the pulldown claw in relation to the manufacturing of a flexible film base of reasonable tolerance. Today, film and video have interpenetrated throughout the production of commodities ultimately destined for one or the other venue. This merging combines two very different sites or phenomenologies of representation, which are described below.

Although super 8mm still retains an edge over 3/4" U-Matic video in terms of resolution, film and video may be considered ultimately equivalent in the degree of quantitative information presented per frame. This is based on the development of high-definition television (HDTV) which will reproduce about half the information present in a 35mm slide. Industrial or military scanning systems can present as many as 10,000 lines to the frame - compared to the 500+ in commercial television or the 450+ in high-end popular tape formats. Therefore we do not look for a primary differentiation between the two media in terms of quantitative information (sharpness or contrast ratio).

The primary differentiation is not located in histories or practices, although these vary widely. We acknowledge a materialism at work here, and ignore the class-dialectical aspects, including research programs, demographics, etc. Although intertwined with the technology, we consider them surface phenomena.

The viewing milieus (normative venues) of film and video are different: theater versus home, external versus internal illumination. The viewer perceives the television set as one object among many (a piece of furniture to be *watched*), and the film screen as that absence of object within a spectacular and darkened space (a field to be *seen*). Television occurs in light, an everyday space of idle conversation, while film is presented in a darkness impregnated with meaning. But the primary differentiation lies elsewhere.

(Of course we are constructing a myth of the cave and the stoa. This is traced in the form of the essay itself, in its narrative, which occupies the narrative of film or video. Every spectatorial experience occupies time, develops by virtue of the rupture at both ends.)

Film, from an ontological viewpoint, is a translation of one material stratum, the potential visibility of the real, into another. This translation occurs from the position of a third, the sources

of illumination of the former. This position is that of a mediation which embeds itself by virtue of the latter.

From this viewpoint, the mapping that occurs (by virtue of perspectival optics) appears to be an allegiance, an internalization of the perceived by the film stratum. (The film, defined by an anti-halation layer, is considered to be a two-dimensional surface. Of course this is never true; film is a volume, and this complicates matters.) The alleigance is in the form of similitude or alignment. One is concerned with a projective geometry of an ideal sort itself translated into an applied mathematics jostling between two materialities.

Video, however, is a translation which involves an ontological break (*ontology at work*, even in the application of the Marxist theory of reflection, designed to return information theory once again to the Practical - inert); it occurs between a material stratum and a potential well of discrete (digital) or indiscrete (analog) reversible states fully translatable and equivalent. This well is a momentary stasis, an impediment or data bank, a node, within an idealized flow of communications. The well is characterized by electronic links; reversibility guarantees ideal constructibility (and also an insipid and exhausted temporality - desire, produce, reproduce, desire, use as much time/tape as you like!). Video has no allegiance to the material stratum which is only one source, a source among many. Its allegiance in fact is to a secondary narcissism: from external manipulation vis-a-vis a human operator/subject to a total internalization as the image is enfolded into the body. This internalization is in the form of a circulation operating on the level of, and by the laws of, the *dreamwork*: condensation, displacement, inversion, substitution, and the recuperation of the dream-time are the primary processes here.

Video is therefore the *cinema of thought*: cinema is *mediated by thought*. Video turns the viewer back to him/herself; cinema returns the viewer to the world. This is reflected in the technology involved. The film apparatus is ultimately mechanical; even the nicad batteries translate into motor operations. But video translates into parameterization, the isolatable and isolated constituents of information, and the image is manipulated in an idealized (imaginary/Imaginary) space devoid of representation. Film may approach this space, and this is the influence of video, but the approach is mechanical, clumsy - the use of numerous camera passes, matte and optical effects, slit-scan technology, motion control, etc. Music video, television, and the hysteria of spectacular consumption have influenced cinematic representation to the point that it attempts to appropriate this idealized space for itself. The frame becomes a construction: as in set theory, the universe of images becomes equivalent to their *constructibility*. Economics and audience demographics ar at stake. Media proliferate beneath the guise of capital.

The primary state of video (down to the alignment of magnetic domains on the tape itself) is switched, reversible, impermanent; the state of film is fragile (subject to wear, to the "ravages of time"), irreversible. A developed film is in a sense identical to its embedded images. The images carried by tape represent a temporary stasis.

Manipulation in video occurs within a discrete state-space: the alteration of the image occurs within the identical closure of its production. Manipulation in film is a posteriori to source (often occurring in other generations); while the frame is discrete in film, thus enveloping the real as

occupant, the pixel is discrete in digital video, producing empty polarity as the potential for minimal content. (*Nowhere* does the real appear in either, except as disorder, disorderly.)

Deconstruction in film (i.e. the self-reflexivity/criticality of post-May 468 political cinema) is the deconstruction of the mediation of the real; this mediation is a primary object of film theory. Deconstruction-closure (a contradiction in terms) in video transforms into a surrealism guaranteeing the subject, subjectivity, narcissistic processes and slippage, as well as an ultimate decontextualization in which the objects of the world are recognized as colonized subjects which themselves reproduce (both within video and without it) the manipulated contents of the screen.

The object as represented in the film frame is a category of linkages forming a Jordan (closed) curve with an interior and exterior defined by noisy (grain) boundaries. The object represented in the video frame is a system of accumulations exhausted in time and presenting the analog of a Jordan curve viewed from a suitable distance; these accumulations are characterized by their presentation across scan lines "contradicting" the topology of the object.

In video, the contingent or continuous object. In film, the representation permeated by noise. (In video, noise too!)

For the viewer, the video image is ideal, "psychoanalytical." The film image is archeological, embedded within an object psychology.

The video image is a top-down presentation of discrete translations of sets of elements; these translations are dependent upon mathematical transformations and the primary source material (internally or externally generated). In film, the translations ("special effects") are an interplay of constructions of all sorts, ultimately based on a mechanical-optical technology which has changed little from the time of the *Encyclopedia*.

The filmmaker organizes herself/himself around part-objects: splicer, editing table, bins, synchronizers, footage counters, magnetic and optical readers, gloves, glue, tape. These generate mechanical-optical activities in the form of juggling between signifiers and semiotic systems. Such activities transform the configuration of the workprint itself, an object. The videomaker recognizes the presence of drives and pathways which are electronically constrained. The semiotics is built into the editorial apparatus which generates signs. If film operates under difference, video operates under division. If film is additive, video multiplies into noise and overload.

In video, the representation of external reality (as if reality were external!) is immediately placed within an exchange system. Using a home camcorder, for example, both internal and external titling (involving key effects) create inserts into any image. Those portions of the image which are masked are exchanged for other content (titles, etc.), which form a second and equivalent level of representation. Since in simple inserts, luminosity determines the areas to be occupied by the second level, luminosity is defined as a parameter against "content." Video synthesizers with external inputs, digital editors, etc., are all capable of the same. In film, the filter often falls between the camera and the scene to be filmed; the filter becomes an editorializing apparatus

within the "theater of the real." This is also true for simple keyhole matting and special effects. (The mattebox and the filter are *objects*.)

Video operates within a hueristics of discrete logics, that, through the presence of an increasingly fine mesh, reproduce the presence of the body. The body is simultaneously here, there, elsewhere. The body of video is self-contained, logical, surrealistic, drema-logical. The discrete frame of film may be contradicted by gestural logics that play aross it, the indefinite spectrum of light and dark, shadows, luminosities, paralleling the transgressive play of gestural logics across the spectator's body. But the film is internalized by the spectator, while video internalizes the spectator.

Film is *abject*, shadow and material, abstract and reprsentation. It is dirty, and always dirty; noise adheres to it in the form of object-particles - dust, hair, spores, earth. The dirtiness of film is the presence of the flesh, the imminency of flesh. It is the flesh of the actor or actress which presents itself. Cinematic pornography is more powerful and empowered than its video equivalent; the theater is the consummation of _illicit_ masturbation, fetishization, and the realm of skin descending to spectatorial transgression. Video pornography is simply the presence of other people. Video noise is a displacement of the image; film dirt is a condensation, an adhesion of parasitic material to the supposedly clean and proper body. Deep down, we know the body is never clean. Cinema is pornographic by its very nature (is that the primary differentiation?). Cinema procures us in the negation of etiquette and its replacement by the longing of touch. One touches the dirt of the film. Video is always polite.

And video is the cinema of thought - a complete equivalence of objects in which a horse and man, for example, may be placed upside-down in the sky; in which a woman, for example, may be exchanged for the man. This is paradoxically the totalization of the real, a totalitarianism in which every object is subject and subject to manipulation. To the extent that video is indexical (and film ikonic), manipulation has uncomfortable implications for the theater of the real. Everything becomes part-object under capital: video makes capital of the traditional alienation-effect (Marx, Brecht), in which objects are mediated by commodification and abstract labor. The simulacrum appears. Film gets away with this because of the very intransigence, inertia, of the theatrical. Precisely because it is theatrical, it is real. Precisely because video is real, it is not theatrical. Video flows into secondary narcissistic processes. The landscape of the dream.

In both video and film, the audience works. To work through the dream-work is to work. Everyone knows this who bothers to even watch an audience.

It should be noted that the self-referentiality of video is fundamental, in spite of everything. This is why it may be *watched*. An object in love with itself. Speaking in video is fundamental, saying this or that, and it's like a snapshot, appears like one in any case. This gives programs such as 60 Minutes their power: Be quite! Someone's talking! The small speakers of the television set guarantee the presence of someone. She's over there. Video is always *present* in this regard; she's speaking *now*, but we don't care - we're simply listening to her.

The acoustic and maternalizing space of the film is far more complex; here I note only the relationship of the sound to the introjection of the diegesis, as well as the phenomenology of a

space that is ultimately an interiority. The theater is the space of the spoken, the spectatorial space in which the optical perspective of the camera/projector combination (the optical *machine*, in fact, organizing the space of the real within a totalization of mechanism and recall) is displaced by an ungrounded acoustics. The dream-screen is not the visible, but the audible. One enters into a space that is hearing itself, fulfilled with transparencies and digressions, overlaps and chatterings that deconstruct location, and the site of the spectator. What the spectator or viewer *does* is *see*, what is *occurring* is *hearing*. This is a fundamental distinction in cinema; again, there is a primary difference between film and video. In film, one *hears*; in video, one *listens*. If video is of the present and present, film is the time of the subject.

Just as the "I" of this essay is a problematic construct, polarizing and institutionalizing the process of its reading, so the ostensible content of this essay is also problematic deployed along and against contradictory institutions. One sees signs of this immediately in the blurred distinctions between "film" and "cinema," and between "television" and "video." "Film" is used in general to refer both to the technology and its consequences; "cinema" - already economically institutionalized - points to a certain narratology that, I would claim, is inherent both in mental process and the technology itself. While "television" both refers to an apparatus and its deployment, "video" implies the internalized information - electronic constructs - as well as styles operative off of those constructs, such as the image manipulation developed at the Chicago Institute of Art.

Some final points need to be mentioned here - first, I believe that the narratology of film and video is rooted not only in the conventions of representations, economics, and fashion - but also in the "operations" of the mind itself using models, for example, from cognitive psychology). This alignment with neural matter, in a sense, is what gives film and video their enormous power. The former is also augmented by the psychoanalytics of theatrical architecture, the latter by its everyday habitus. (I᾽ve developed this argument at length in "Theses on the Inversion of the Cinema".)

Criticism 1: But the presence of economics, demographics, the constitution of the spectator, gaze, etc. - are not secondary sources "applied" to fundamental technological differences; instead, the presentations (productions) themselves are complicated *from the beginning* by virtue of the confluence of these areas - their virtual *embedding* in technology.

Criticism 2: Furthermore, Freudian processes can shift across media; they᾽re not local inhabitations, dependent upon them.

Defense of poverty: Deeper, perhaps, I᾽d again invert this argument, however, to recuperate a difference within and beyond the history of the media. For it᾽s evident - the "experimentations" in film or video that have extended their boundaries, have developed in very different directions. A great deal of experimental video uses digital editing, reverting perhaps to a critical-theory phenomenology of equivalence and industrial massification. (Almost, but not quite, and this is all the difference in the world.) Even video concerned with gender issues often foregrounds editing. This is not true in film, in which different identification processes appear to be at work; opticals are often restricted to fades, wipes, and pixillation effects. Even prior to music video, the evening news stressed an accumulation of signifiers and "pop" signs heralding one story or another.

Although it is technically truer in video that "you are there," in terms of a news story, "you are there" implies either a radio or cinematic presentation in which the spectator is simultaneously the production of an introjection and at the deployment of an apparent representation of the real.

To summarize: Film appears to be at the service of the materiality of everyday life, which is transformed into the theatrical; television displaces the same materiality in favor of a reflection/disassociation substrate. Film cuts into the real; television cuts across it. Film implies use value (every object on a dressing table in a 1940s drama, for example, *signifies*); television implies exchange. And if television is postmodern (in the Lyotardian sense), film is *premodern* at best, or else a remove from the terms of the discussion altogether.

Two Films:

Sleazy and the Year 3000, 1987: Sound by Damaged Life. Woman: Marlis Schmidt.

Debrisfilm, 1989: Digital guitar produced by David Smith.

This stage of my filmwork involves projections of narrative encapsulated by death. The first film territorializes sleaziness and the future. Sleaziness is culturally problematic, a site possessing a lumpen-economics, sexualities deployed across the fetishied body - its graininess, the citation of the torn or cauterized, and so forth. The sleazy corrupts, corrodes; presence and the present vanishes. What a violence emerges! As in Ballard's *Crash*, car and organism are one; each wounds and sutures the other. The future wanders around the present, expands it into an infinite longing which is rootless and insistent on a denuded absolute. Nothing is fulfilled. The year 3000 is sufficiently "foreign" in terms of projection/projectiles (imagination/imaginary) that it becomes another deployment, the beginning and stuttering of narrative and diegesis.

Thus against these fields, narrative falters, is born, hystericizes, liquifies in the realm of jewels and genders, disappears. The film ends. Hold your breath.

It is the bearing of sexuality (baring of the filmmaker) that resolves theory back into the body (no resolution here), but the body hopelessly theorized, awash in speech. It is the baring of narrative (narrative's sex) that longs for completion.

The second film wants to straighten it, operating on the plane of the real. It drags the film in with it. Introduces and reintroduces itself. It dissolves into turbulence, the temporary stasis of*animals* (large-scale "entities" remaining coherent in the midst of a chaotic liquid), almost on the level of non-equilibrium thermodynamics (plateaus of stabilization, such as organic systems). (This is in your head.) But not quite.

Continues with the filmmaker's body, arousal states, sexuality modelled on 1950s soft-core, incomplete, the shaved body swimming through production debris. Exhibitions of a whore. The filmstock employed is outdated for the most part, a gift from one or another filmmaker - Phil

Niblock, Leslie Thornton. Granularity swallows the body like menses or semen. Body in idel chatter, flickering throughout its development. Body of the film - what else is the film about?

(I question those films using sex, nakedness, and *always the other*, never the filmmaker himself/herself. Arousal elsewhere. As if the line to be drawn were against the apparatus. "He" gets involved when the camera's off. Psychoanalytics and economics are involved: *"He" hires her*. The case of the *same*. My films are poor films. I use myself, present myself, a gift. Embed myself within desire, audience, abjection. The delight in all of this. The other body the self. what about this nakedness, this heterosexuality, equation of film, power, state, lassitude, weakness, perversion?)

What's present, a *clot* or *coagulation*, signification sinking, taking the State (the Metro!) along with it, branding me unwholesome, unwelcome, beyond the Pale, undesierable. Flowing through your veins, dissecting this particular sexuality always labelled *male*, same, jerk-off - this devouring sexuality in which the consensus-role of theory liquifies in spontaneities. There's not enough said about this, this placement of the clot against the sleazy orgasm sticking to the real, as if puttering or identity were all there is to it. What spills over is a politics that begins and ends with sputtering.

"Asked for what reason she had taken man's dress. She answered that she had done so just now. Asked why, and who had induced her to do so. She said, of her own will. And that nobody had forced her to do so. And that she preferred man's dress to woman's.

"Wherefore she was reminded that she had sworn and promised never again to wear male clothing. To which she replied that she had never intended to take an oath not to take man's dress again.

"Being asked several more times why she had taken it again. She said that she had done so because it seemed to her more suitable and convenient to wear man's dress being with men, than to wear woman's dress."

(*Joan of Arc, Trial for Relapse*,trans. Scott.)